

White Paper Report

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centerNet: cyberinfrastructure for the digital humanities white paper

Background: In response to a summit held at the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2007 and hosted by the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH), a North American group of centers began serving as a steering committee to foster collaboration. In 2009, a Digital Humanities Start-Up grant was received by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the University of Maryland to expand the idea of centerNet worldwide, to create a formal structure, and to develop a business plan for long-term stability of the organization.

Activity: Through the 2009 funding provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, centerNet has developed into an international network of digital humanities centers. To achieve this end, an international summit was held in July 2010 at King's College London. About 60 center directors and funders were invited to attend. There was tremendous enthusiasm for creating an international association, and a rationale and a general structure for doing so was discussed. Consequently, four regional affiliates have formed in Asia Pacific, Europe, North America and the U.K. and Ireland, although we believe that the U.K. and Ireland will merge with centerNet Europe in 2013. Many centerNet members have been seeking centers in other parts of the world, however, it seems likely that libraries and information technology units may serve in place of centers in regions such as South America, Africa and Southeast Asia and India. Our hope is to help emerging centers develop by providing consulting and expertise.

In order to conduct the business of centerNet, each regional affiliate selected two representatives to serve on an international executive council. With the help and backing of the international executive council, the principal investigators have worked with many others to develop governance documents, membership and business plans, to form partnerships with other organizations, and to plan for centerNet's future programming.

As of 2012, centerNet is a constituent organization of the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO), and through this relationship, has a measure of stability for the future. As a constituent organization, centerNet is unlike any of the others in ADHO. It is an organization of centers rather than an organization of individuals. Because of the need to address membership fees differently for centerNet, ADHO has worked with Oxford University Press to change the means of joining centerNet

from paying subscription fees (to *LLC: the journal of digital scholarship in the humanities*) to paying membership fees, resulting in a subscription to LLC only if desired.

While developing centerNet's governance structure and financial planning has taken a long time, the international board seems to have consensus now about our strategic directions, and as its organizational documentation and financial situation plays out, the council is now considering various programs and membership benefits of centerNet.

- One is the revitalization of *arts-humanities. net* under another name and in partnership with DHCommons. Working with partners at King's College London and the University of Southampton, a new Drupal backend is in place. An international transition committee has proposed several far reaching and exciting changes that are being considered by the international executive council.
- Day of DH, formerly managed by the University of Alberta, has been adopted as a program of centerNet and this in turn becomes a benefit of membership.
- The centerNet website includes a map of the world with the location of centers and an aggregated RSS feed feature.
- centerNet has a listserv that will continue to be open.

In addition to the work of the regional affiliates and the international executive council, centerNet has an annual general membership meeting at the ADHO Digital Humanities conferences.

The vision for centerNet is to share expertise and promote collaboration among centers—whether to facilitate conferences or to foster innovation through collaborative project development. Working with partners such as the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI), new curricular models are being developed for graduate education in digital humanities. We are establishing other formal affiliations with like-minded organizations, including the Coalition of Humanities and Arts Infrastructure Network (CHAIN), DHCommons, the Digital Library Federation, and *4Humanities*. Through these partnerships we believe that centerNet will continue to make a difference.

Conclusion:

Although paperwork remains ahead of us, centerNet is now a reality, and it has great potential for encouraging international collaboration for research and teaching.